

A Living Saviour

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[0 : 0 0] Well, if we could, for a short while this evening, if we could turn back to that portion of scripture that we read, 1 Peter chapter 1, and if we read again, verse 13, 1 Peter chapter 1 and verse 13, where Peter writes, Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you as holy, you also be holy in all your conduct. Since it is written, you shall be holy, for I am holy, and so on.

The other day I came across an article written by Martin Bashir, who is the religious affairs correspondent for the BBC. And the article was entitled, Why Christianity is Still Relevant This Easter. And Martin Bashir, he wrote, If Christmas is now a secular celebration, then what do we make of Easter? Is holy week more about chocolate eggs than the crucifixion of Jesus Christ? And since the latest British social attitude survey says that 53% of the British public now describe themselves as having no religion, isn't it time to consign these Christian festivals to history? Should we accept the advice offered by an advertising company on the side of London buses in 2008 that read, There's probably no God, now stop worrying and enjoy your life. But you know, as a committed Christian, Martin Bashir, he went on to explain that there is hope in the resurrection. He said, The Christian faith speaks of Christ's death on the cross as an atoning sacrifice for our sin and our wrongdoing, and his resurrection as an opportunity to start again. And you know, those words which really stuck with me that the hope of the resurrection is that we have the opportunity to have our sins forgiven and to start again. And you know, that's why Christianity is still relevant this Easter, because of the because the hope of the resurrection is that we're able to have a new beginning. We're able to experience a new birth. We're able to receive a new heart. We're able to become a new creation. We're able to sing a new song and serve a new master and live a new life. The hope of the resurrection is that we have the opportunity to have our sins forgiven and start again. And you know, that's what Peter sought to remind the Christian church, that we have a living salvation through a living savior.

We have a living salvation through a living savior. And as we saw last Lord's day, Peter was writing to saints, saints who were scattered. And they were scattered not because of a pandemic like ourselves, but because of persecution. And Peter sought to encourage the Christian church by reminding them and us that we've been blessed. We've been blessed with a sure salvation. We've been blessed because we're born again to a living hope. We're being kept by the power of God. And we have a promised glorious inheritance when we see Jesus face to face. We have a living salvation through a living savior, Jesus Christ. Therefore says Peter in verse 13. Therefore, if we have a living salvation through a living savior, we need to live like Jesus and love like Jesus. We need to grow in grace. We need to conform to Christ likeness. We need to harness our holiness. We need to live like Jesus and love like Jesus in our mind, body and soul. And you know, that's what Peter reminds us in this passage, that we have a living salvation through a living savior who has redeemed us, mind, body and soul. I know it's because of this that Peter says, conform your mind, control your body and check your soul. Conform your mind, control your body and check your soul.

And there are three headings this evening. Conform your mind, control your body and check your soul. So first of all, conform your mind. Peter says in verse 13. Therefore, preparing your minds for action and being sober minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Now, as we go through this letter, we'll see that Peter, he often uses Old Testament language in order to illustrate his point. Now, we saw that last week, right at the beginning of the letter, when Peter described the Christian church as elect exiles. But in this section, I believe that Peter calls the Christian church, he calls us to be holy and he calls us to holy living by using the greatest commandment, which was first written in Deuteronomy chapter six, the greatest commandment to love the Lord your God, with all your heart, with all your mind, with all your soul, and with all your strength, and your neighbor as yourself. Peter reminds us that because we have a living salvation through a living savior, we should live like

Jesus and love like Jesus in our mind, body and soul. And that's where Peter begins in March 13. He says, prepare your minds for action. What action? The action of living like Jesus and loving like Jesus in your mind. Prepare your mind for action. Literally, Peter says, as it is in the authorised version, he says, guard up the loins of your mind. Guard up the loins of your mind. He's using the image there of a Roman soldier who has been called to go up to battle. And you know, when a Roman soldier was called up for action, the first thing the Roman soldier would do is gird up the loins, his loins, and put on a belt. He would take the edges of his loose flowing robe and tuck it into his loins. He would tuck it into his belt so that he wouldn't trip up as he moves forward into battle. And so what Peter is saying there is prepare your mind for battle. Prepare your mind for the daily Christian struggle. Because if you don't, you'll trip up. In fact, Paul, he uses the same imagery in Ephesians chapter six, when he calls us to put on the whole armor of God.

[7 : 25] And you know, the first thing Paul says there in Ephesians six, the first thing we need to do in order to stand against the wildest of the devil is gird your loins with truth.

Put on your belt of truth, he says. Therefore, what both Peter and Paul emphasize is that in order to live like Jesus and love like Jesus, you need to conform your mind. You need to tuck in and tie down all those loose corners. Because if you don't, they'll cause you to fall. In other words, your mind is not to be filled and fooled by worldly beliefs or unbiblical thinking. No says Peter. As a Christian, you can't have loose thoughts that are being drawn in and drawn upon by the world. You can't have the world guiding your life and witness. He says, because everything in your life must be tucked into the word of God. Everything must be tied down with sound doctrine. Everything must be squared up with scripture. Otherwise, those loose thoughts will cause you to rationalize your sin. Those loose thoughts will cause you to make excuses for your sin. Those loose and lax thoughts will let you entertain worldly thinking that minimizes the seriousness of your sin. My friend, the Christian life is a battle of the mind. The Christian life is a battle of the mind. You know, that's why John Calvin said, it's what goes into your mind that makes you a strong Christian. It's what goes into your mind that makes you a strong Christian. Therefore, our minds need to be clear, not clouded. They need to be focused, not fooled. They need to be sober, not senseless. And that's what Peter says.

He says, preparing your minds and being sober minded. He says, don't become intoxicated in your mind. Don't become intoxicated by the wiles of the devil or the world and its demands or even the wants of the day. Be sober minded. Don't fall under the influence of this world. Don't become under the influence of all the allurements and all the temptations of sin. Don't listen to all these voices that are always competing for your attention.

Be sober minded, he says. Think clearly. Think biblically. Think with sound judgment because it's what goes into your mind that makes you a strong Christian. But you know, how do you know if you're sober minded? How do you know if you're sober minded? Well, you know if you're sober minded, if your friendship with Jesus is more desirable than your friendship with the world, you know if you're sober minded, if you're longing to live like Jesus and love like Jesus, you know if you're sober minded, says Peter, if your hope is fixed and focused upon the revelation of Jesus Christ, because that was the mind of Jesus. Yo, that was the mind of Jesus. In fact, Paul, in Philippians chapter two, Paul in Philippians chapter two encourages the Christians in Philippi to have the mind of Jesus. He says, let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus. And the mind which Paul wanted the Christians in Philippi to possess was a mind that was fixed and focused upon the cross and the crown of Jesus Christ. That's the mind were to have a mind that is fixed upon the cross and the crown of Jesus Christ. And you know, during this period of lockdown and being confined to our homes and unable to visit family and friends, and in some cases, people with more time on their hands, you know, there's been this repeated emphasis from the government and the NHS that were to take care of our mental health, were to take care of our mental health by exercising and looking out for one another, where we're to mind our mind, we're to mind our mind. And that's the message Peter is giving to us. Mind your mind. Take care of your mind, because it's what goes into your mind that's important. Because you know, there's always this danger, isn't there? There's always the danger that we can waste our time by filling our minds with things that are of no benefit to us. And as we know these things, they don't cause us to conform our mind to Christ. They don't cause us to live like Jesus and love like Jesus. That's why Peter says in verse 14, as obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance. Don't fill your mind with the things that you used to fill your mind with. He says, no, as obedient children. And that's he describes the church as obedient children, meaning that as a child of God, you are to be an obedient child. And your obedience, he says, it isn't an option. It's an obligation. If you're a child of God, then your obedience is an obligation. You're not to conform your mind to this world, but conform your mind to the word. Conform your mind to the word. Do not be conformed to the world, said Paul, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. But how are you to renew your mind? How are we to conform our mind? How are we to transform our mind by the word? By the word. Peter says in verse 15, as he who called you as holy, you also be holy in all your conduct. Since it is written, the word since it is written, be holy for I am holy. Peter says in order to conform your mind in order to live like Jesus and love like Jesus, you need to pursue holiness. Because

as the Bible affirms without holiness, no one shall see the Lord. No one shall see the Lord. Of course, as we've said, this letter was written to scattered saints. And that's what the word saint comes from. Because saints, sanctification, holiness, they all come from the same root word meaning to be holy. And as you know, to be holy means to be separate, to be set apart, to be distinct and to pursue holiness and to practice holiness is not to pursue sin and not to practice sin. And so as Christians, well, we may ask, why are we to conform our mind? Why are we to live like Jesus and love like Jesus? Why are we to be holy? And Peter says, well, it's what the Bible says. Because it is written. Because it is written, be holy for I am holy. It's amazing the amount of times that is said and written in the Bible. Be holy for I am holy. I know that call to pursue holiness. It was first issued to the Israelites in the Old Testament, but it applies to every generation of God's people. We are to be holy, because our God is holy. Our God is holy. But Peter says that our pursuit of holiness, our pursuit to live like Jesus and love like Jesus, it should not only affect our mind, but it should also affect our body. And that's what Peter says. Secondly, he says we have a living salvation through a living savior. Therefore, conform your mind and control your body. Control your body. He says in verse 17, and if you call on him as Father who judges him impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. Now you remember this morning that we mentioned that the wonderful truth of Easter is all because of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, because we have a living salvation through a living savior. And because of that wonderful hope, when a Christian dies, their grave belongs to Jesus. And their grave belongs to Jesus because their body belongs to Jesus.

[17:06] It's Jesus who redeems us mind, body and soul. And that's what the Catechism emphasizes. We mentioned that this morning that the souls of believers shall at their death made perfect in holiness and they do immediately pass into glory. But their bodies, their bodies still be united to Christ, their bodies still belonging to Jesus, they rest in their graves until the resurrection. But of course, your body doesn't just belong to Jesus at death. Your body belongs to Jesus every day of your life. Because Jesus has redeemed you mind, body and soul. And this is the thing you need to remember, your body is precious to Jesus, not only because he has created your body, and he sustains your body, but also because he has redeemed your body. And now as a Christian with a living salvation through a living savior, you are to live like Jesus and love like Jesus with your body. Peter says, you need to control your body. You need to control your body. Of course, Jesus doesn't want us to abuse our body. He doesn't want us to abuse our body by what we scoff, swig, smoke, sniff or share. And you know, these things are important, because how we control our body affects our Christian character, conduct and conversation. And what Peter is saying is your Christian witness is important. That's what he's saying here. Your Christian witness is important. You've been redeemed mind, body and soul. But the thing is people can read your mind. They can't, they can't look into your soul. But they can see your body. They can witness how you conduct yourself. And that's why Peter said only two verses earlier in verse 15. He said, as he who called you as holy, you also must be holy in all your conduct. And then he says here in verse 17, conduct yourselves with fear. Conduct yourselves in a respectful and dignified manner. Conduct yourselves with holiness and in a Christ like way throughout the time of your exile. In other words, be aware of your Christian character, conduct and conversation and be in control of it. Love live like Jesus and love like

Jesus with your body, because your body is not your own. Your body is not your own. That's what Peter teaches us here. He says, you were ransomed. Your body is not your own because you were redeemed. You were bought back. You were once a slave in chains, he says. You were bound and fastened unable to escape. You were once a slave to sin with your body.

You were dead in your trespasses and sins. You were walking according to the course of this world, following the Prince of the power of the air. And you lived. How did you live in the passions of your flesh? You carried out the desires of your mind and even your body and you were by nature children of wrath like the rest of mankind. But God, this is the wonder of the gospel, but God who is rich and mushy for his great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses and sins. Peter says he redeemed you from your futile ways. He redeemed you from your former life of vanity and he redeemed you not with corruptible things such as silver and gold. No, no, no. You're far more precious than that. He redeemed you. He set you free. He bought you back with the precious blood of Christ. He redeemed you with the precious blood of Christ. And you know my unconverted friend, I always go back every time I read these words, I always go back to that wonderful him that asks the question, have you been to Jesus for the cleansing power? Are you washed in the blood of the lamb? Are you fully trusting in his grace this hour? Are you washed in the blood of the lamb? Are you washed in the blood in the soul cleansing blood of the lamb? Are your garments spotless? Are they white as snow? Are you washed in the blood of the lamb? Because this Jesus, he's able to redeem you with his precious blood and he's able to redeem you mind, body and soul. But you know as those who have been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, Peter says before you the standard of obedience which you're to imitate with your body. And he does that by describing Jesus as a lamb without blemish and without spot. Of course Peter, he doesn't expect you to be sinless, but he does expect you to strive to live like Jesus and love like Jesus by controlling your body.

Because when the Lamb of God, when he came to take away the sin of the world, Jesus were told was led as a lamb to the slaughter and he was led there in obedience. And he offered his body as a sacrifice for sin in obedience. He was obedient to the Father's will. He was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. He was obedient in his body for you. This is the point that Peter's making. Jesus was obedient with his body for you. Therefore, you need to be obedient with your body for him. You need to control your body because your body belongs to Jesus. In fact, Paul says to us, your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. And that's something Paul repeatedly emphasized in his letters that the Christian life is not just a battle of the mind, it's also a battle of the body.

It's a battle between the spirit and the flesh, the spirit and the body. And Paul emphasizes this. He emphasizes it in Romans 7 and Romans 8, but we see it clearly in Galatians chapter 5. When Paul says, walk in the spirit and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

[23 : 55] For the works of the flesh, he says, are evident. Sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, things like these, he says. And Paul says, I warn you as I warned you before that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the spirit, what you've been redeemed for, what you've been redeemed for with the precious blood of Christ as a Christian says Paul, with a living salvation through a living Savior.

In order to live like Jesus and love like Jesus with your body, you need to possess and practice the fruit of the spirit, which is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control. And those who belong to Jesus Christ were told they have crucified the flesh, crucified the body with its passions and desires. Therefore, if we live by the spirit, we will also walk by the spirit. My friend, in our pursuit of holiness, we must seek to live like Jesus and love like Jesus in our mind, our body and our soul. Because as Christians, we have a living salvation through a living Savior.

Therefore says Peter, conform your mind, control your body. And then lastly, check your soul. Check your soul. That's what we see in verse 22. Check your soul. Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart. Since you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God. For all flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord remains forever. And this word is the good news that was preached to you. Now we said earlier that in this passage, Peter is calling the Christian church to holy living.

And he says that we have a living salvation through a living Savior. Therefore, we're to live like Jesus and love like Jesus. And as we said, Peter's teaching here, it seems to be based upon the great, the greatest commandment, love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength and your neighbor as yourself. And Peter has told us, he said, conform your mind, control your body and check your soul. And in this section, Peter draws attention to the soul by saying, as you see there in verse 22, having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth of God's word. Now, of course, your soul is often described as the seat or the center of your life. Your soul, it incorporates the heart, the emotions, the conscience and your will. And your soul is precious. That's why Jesus asked the question, what will it profit a man if he were to gain the whole world and lose his own soul? But as a Christian, your soul is saved. Your soul has been sanctified. And Peter says an evidence of that is when you love the Lord, your God with all your soul and your neighbor as yourself.

But you'll remember that it was on the night of the Passover when Jesus, he not only instituted the Lord's supper, but he also instituted a new commandment. Of course, Peter, he was present to hear this new commandment. And the new commandment was, as Jesus said, love one another as I have loved you, love one another as I have loved you. Jesus, he took the greatest commandment a step further by saying that with your soul, you're to love God and love your neighbor just as I love you. How much does Jesus love us? Well, Jesus says himself, greater love has no man than this, that a man laid down his life for his friends. So it's not love, God and your neighbor as yourself, but love God and your neighbor as Jesus loves them. Therefore, we're to live like Jesus. And we're to love like Jesus, because as Jesus said, when you live like me and when you love like me, everyone will know that you are my disciples. Love one another as I have loved you, because by this, all men will know that you are my disciples. And so, see, Peter says, check your soul. Check your soul because how much do you live like Jesus? How much do you love like Jesus? How much do you love one another? And you should love one another, you should live like Jesus and love like Jesus says Peter, because you have been born again. You've been born again, he says, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable by the living and abiding word of God. He says, check your soul that you love one another because you've been born again to a living salvation through a living savior. You have a new birth, he says. You have a new beginning.

[29 : 52] You have a new heart, you're a new creation, you sing a new song, you serve a new master, you're part of a new covenant, you live a new life, you have a living hope, and it's all because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Therefore, says Peter, as a Christian, check your soul that you live like Jesus and you love like Jesus. Why? Because life is too short. Life is too short. That's what Peter says. He says verse 24, all flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, the flower falls, but the word of the Lord remains forever. Peter says God's seed doesn't perish, but saints and sinners do. God's word doesn't wither, but worshipers do. God's promises are forever, but God's people are like the flower. They fade, they fail, and eventually they fall. My friend, life, it's too short. Life is too short for friction, fights, and fallouts. It's too short for friction, fights, and fallouts between saints or sinners, between friends or family. It's too short to fall out with your nearest or with your neighbour.

Life is too short. And you know, if this period of lockdown should teach us anything, it should teach us that relationships within our own home, within our own family, within our own community, within our own congregation, relationships are precious. And you know what ought to characterise us as a Christian church is love. Love. But Peter doesn't leave it there. He goes on in the opening verses of chapter two, and he says, if you have a living salvation through a living saviour, if you have tasted that the Lord is gracious, if you desire this and see a milk of the word that you would grow in grace and conform to Christ likeness and harness your holiness, then he says, check your soul. Check your soul by putting away all malice, all deceit, all hypocrisy and all envy and all slander and love one another as Christ has loved you. Check your soul. You know, my friend, I don't know about you, but I find this so challenging. It's a huge challenge. But you know, that's what Peter wrote to the Christian church, a scattered saints. They were scattered throughout these different regions. And yet he reminded them and he reminds us that we have a living salvation through a living saviour, a saviour who has redeemed us mind, body and soul. And it's because of this, because we've been redeemed mind, body and soul, we're to conform our mind, we're to control our body, we're to check our soul. And it's all so that we will live like Jesus and love like Jesus.

And as Jesus says, by this, all will know that you are my disciples. My friend, let's seek to live like Jesus and love like Jesus for the glory of his name and the furtherance of his kingdom. Well, may the Lord bless these thoughts to us and let us pray.

Oh Lord, our gracious God, may give thanks to thee for thy word, that it lives and it abides forever. And we pray even at the passage that we've read this evening and considered that it would abide in our heart forever, that thou wouldst continue to teach us day by day to conform our mind to Jesus and even to control our body for Jesus. And Lord, we ask that thou wouldst enable us to check our soul, that we are following Jesus day by day.

We confess, Lord, that we're not what we ought to be. But we thank thee and we praise thee for that great resurrection hope that he who has begun a good work in us will bring it on to completion at the day of Christ Jesus, that the Lord one who is working in us both to will and to do for his own good pleasure. Bless us then we pray, help us to serve thee alright, help us to love one another and to give thee the glory in all that we say and do. Go before us and we ask, keep us in the weak Lord that lies ahead, another weak that is unknown to us. But we give thanks, Lord, that everything is known to thee. Help us then to bring everything to thee in prayer and to cast every care into thine hand for the one who cares for us. Do us good we ask, go before us for Jesus' sake. Amen.